

National Aeronautics and  
Space Administration  
**Office of the Administrator**  
Washington, DC 20546-0001



May 10, 2005

Captain Eugene A. Cernan, USN (Ret.)

Dear Captain Cernan:

Congratulations on becoming the first astronaut to receive NASA's Ambassador of Exploration Award. What a great honor for you to share with Jan, your family, your fellow Navy astronauts, and the many friends and supporters of the National Museum of Naval Aviation.

The purpose of these awards is to recognize the tremendous contributions America's first generation of astronauts have made to space exploration and to help inspire a new generation to carry the torch of exploration throughout the solar system. Your outstanding service on three space missions, including two Apollo voyages to the moon, and your challenge to America's youth to "take us back out there where we belong," have demonstrated the essence of what our Ambassador of Exploration Awards are all about.

Fittingly, when President Bush presented his Vision for Space Exploration at NASA Headquarters last year, he took inspiration from the last words you spoke from the lunar surface during the Apollo 17 mission 33 years ago. You said, "America's challenge of today has forged man's destiny of tomorrow. As we leave the moon and Taurus-Littrow, we leave as we came, and, God willing, we shall return, with peace and hope for all mankind." The President then stated, "America will make those words come true."

The men and women of NASA are now engaged in the work that will enable our Nation to return humans to the moon, send robotic explorers and ultimately human pioneers to Mars and explore other destinations in our solar system and beyond. In taking on this challenge, we welcome the opportunity to follow in the footsteps of those heroic astronauts who blazed our first pathway beyond Earth. Captain Cernan, we owe you a great debt of gratitude.

Again, please accept my congratulations on being recognized for your significant contributions to the exploration of space. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. D. Griffin", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Michael D. Griffin  
Administrator